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INFORMATION MEMO

FOR: CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS (b) (6) 11/19

FROM: VADM Matthew J. Kohler, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare (N2N6) (b) (6)

SUBJECT: Navy Task Force Climate Change Stand Down

- Admiral, this information memo provides background and reasoning for the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) stand down of the Navy Task Force Climate Change (TFCC) on 14 March 2019, and information regarding congressional and media interest in the decision.
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
  - The decision process used to stand down TFCC was “bottom up” – not “top down.” On 3 May 2018, the TFCC Executive Steering Committee made a unanimous recommendation to stand down TFCC and subsequently staffed a Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Decision Brief (TAB A). This brief was coordinated at the 3-star level across all Deputy Chiefs of Navy Operations and U.S. Fleet Forces enroute to CNO.
  - There is continued congressional interest (TAB B) and media inquiries (TAB C) into the decision to stand down TFCC.
  - Arctic and climate change issues are addressed via assigned responsibilities contained in OPNAVINST 5430.48 series (Office of the CNO Organization and Operations Manual) and are now incorporated into Navy strategy and DoD policy.
- BACKGROUND:
  - Per Vice Chief of Naval Operations memorandum “Navy Task Force Climate Change,” dated 30 October 2009:
    - The purpose of TFCC was to develop a comprehensive approach to guide future public, strategic, and policy discussions.
    - The primary deliverable was a holistic, chronological Arctic roadmap for future Navy action that: (a) was synchronized with a science-based timeline, (b) provided a framework for how the Navy discusses the Arctic, and (c) included a list of appropriate objectives tempered by fiscal realities.
    - The Task Force was to be terminated upon either the recommendation from the TFCC Executive Steering Committee or when superseded by strategy or policy.
  - All prior TFCC Roadmaps were superseded by strategy and policy:
    - “CNO U.S. Navy Arctic Roadmap for 2014-2030,” February 2014, superseded by strategy (e.g., the “Navy Strategic Outlook for the Arctic,” January 2019).
    - “CNO U.S. Navy Climate Change Roadmap,” April 2010, superseded by policy (e.g., the Department of Defense Directive 4715.21, “Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience,” January 2016).

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- In recognition that TFCC processes and products are institutionalized and superseded, on 01 May 2019, RDML Okon (OPNAV N2N6E), as Director of TFCC announced the stand down and cancellation of the charter to TFCC members.
- Media first reported the stand down on August 7, 2019 stating, "Navy quietly shut down climate change task force" and characterized the decision as "suspicious."
  - Senator Warren cited this report in her letter to Secretary Spencer, September 13, 2019. She expressed her concern, asked for Navy's justification for the stand down, and inquired if there was White House involvement.
- The Navy Office of Information (CHINFO) remains the lead for media inquiries pertaining to TFCC. Department of Defense (DoD) Public Affairs remains the lead for media inquiries pertaining to TFCC climate change impacts to DoD missions, operational plans, capabilities, and installations.
- CHINFO's public affairs posture is passive pertaining to the stand down of TFCC. N2N6 PAO utilizes the draft PAG (TAB D) to craft responses in support of CHINFO.
- ISSUE/PROBLEM:
  - Misinterpretation of TFCC stand down by the media and congressional members.
- DISCUSSION/WAY AHEAD:
  - Key messaging:
    - The stand down of TFCC was driven internally by the TFCC Executive Steering Committee in coordination with the release of the Navy Arctic strategy.
    - Arctic and climate change issues considered by TFCC are now incorporated into Navy strategy and DoD policy.
    - Arctic and climate change issues are addressed via assigned responsibilities contained in OPNAVINST 5430.48 series (Office of the CNO Organization and Operations Manual).

COORDINATION: None

Attachments:  
As stated

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